REMARKS

The Examiner rejected claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Dobrovolny in view of Green. The claims recite an end effector with a jaw member that has an adjustable spring force. Green does not disclose an adjustable spring force. As stated on column 20, lines 42-47 of Green the instrument shaft 3 is actually clamped together by rotating knob 118 to push elements 140 and 135 together. The biasing spring merely provides a minimum of friction between the shaft and clamping surface while the knob 118 is loose, column 20, lines 55-61. Green does not disclose a means for adjusting the spring force of spring 133. Additionally, Green would not suggest such a feature because the clamping force is provided by the knob and clamping numbers 135 and 140. Green does not disclose a jaw member with an adjustable spring force to vary the clamping force on the instrument. For this reason the applicant submits that a combination of Dobrovolny and Green does not render claims 1-20 unpatentable.

In view of the above it is submitted that the claims are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejection is requested. Allowance of claims 1-20 at an early date is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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Wendy Jones 8/13/02
Wendy Jones Date

APPENDIX

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1, 2, 11, 12 and 16 have been amended as follows.

1. (Amended) A support arm for a heart stabilizer, comprising:

a table mount;

an arm coupled to said table mount; and,

an end effector coupled to said arm, said end effector having a jaw member with an adjustable spring force.

2. (Amended) The support arm of claim 1, wherein said jaw member[end effector] includes a spring biased retractable jaw member that moves relative to a stationary jaw member.

11. (Amended) A support arm for coupling a heart stabilizer to a table, comprising:

a table mount adapted to be secured to the table;

a first linkage coupled to said table mount;

a second linkage pivotally coupled to said first linkage;

a third linkage pivotally coupled to said second linkage; and,

an end effector pivotally coupled to said third linkage and adapted to be coupled to the heart stabilizer, said end effector having a jaw member with an adjustable spring force.

12. (Amended) The support arm of claim 11, wherein said jaw member[end effector] includes a spring biased retractable jaw member that moves relative to a stationary jaw member.

16. (Amended) A method for coupling a heart stabilizer to a table, comprising:

mounting a support arm to the table;

adjusting a position of the support arm; [and,]

coupling the heart stabilizer to an end effector of the support arm; and,

adjusting a spring force of a jaw member of the end effector.